

LAW ENFORCEMENT PATROL RIFLE POSITIONS

It is a relatively easy task to teach law enforcement students to shoot tight groups with a rifle. Indeed, it is a commonly held opinion that teaching rifle marksmanship is easier than teaching handgun marksmanship. The main reasons for this opinion are the increased sight radius of the rifle over the handgun and the reduced arc of movement (wobble area) that can be achieved by stabilizing the rifle against the officer's shoulder and cheek.

The greater challenge for the law enforcement firearms instructor will be teaching the officers to repeat the point of impact from group to group. This phenomenon of groups wandering around the target is caused primarily by the officer's inability to exactly repeat any of the shooting positions. It is necessary that each shooting position is practiced until it can be repeated without any deviation. This is the only way to ensure that the point of impact remains the same each time the officer shoots from a given position.

Rather than trying to force all officers into the same "picture perfect" position, a more individual approach will be found to be beneficial by the law enforcement firearms instructor. In the same way that not all officers are built alike, not all officers can get into exactly the same position and achieve satisfactory results. It is therefore necessary to build the officer's position based on the three elements that make up a good shooting position and the physical attributes of the officer. However, only minimum modifications should be made to the shooting positions and then only those that are necessary to accommodate the physical makeup of the officer.

The three elements of a good shooting position are bone support, muscular relaxation and natural point of aim.

Bone Support

Shooting positions may be thought of as foundations to support the rifle and that support should be built using the bones of the body. An easel supporting a chalk board or a tripod supporting a camera are good analogies. Officers using muscles for support not only tire very quickly but the rifle will also be subject to the natural elasticity of the muscles which causes the sights to be constantly pulled (muscle) away from the intended point of aim.

Muscular Relaxation

For ultimate precision, the officer must learn to relax into the shooting position as much as possible. Undue strain and tension will cause muscle tremor and trembling that will be transmitted to the rifle. A position built with muscle tension will not return the rifle to the same point of aim after each shot. The law enforcement officer may have to remain in position for extended periods of time. Any position that does not employ the elements of bone support and muscular relaxation will cause the officer to quickly become fatigued.

Natural Point of Aim

The natural point of aim can be defined as that point to which the sights naturally align without muscular interference on the part of the officer. Since the rifle is locked to the body and becomes an extension of the body, it is necessary for the officer to adjust the body position until the rifle

points naturally at the target. When the officer adopts a shooting position and then makes a conscious effort to relax all of the muscles, the sights should not move away from the chosen point of aim. Given that the rifle is level, when the officer breathes, the sights should move vertically down from, and back up to, the point of aim. Once natural point of aim is achieved, the rifle will return to that point of aim after each shot has been fired without need for any correction by the officer between shots.

PRIMARY FIRING POSITIONS

Offhand (Mobility)

Standing, aggressive forward lean

Prone (Get down or get hit)

Kneeling

Speed (immediate response drill); no support

Braced

Double (both knees); shoot up or down easily.

SECONDARY FIRING POSITIONS

Squat - Very fast, lowers profile.

Sitting - Best on down slope.

THE STANDING POSITION CHECKLIST

Bone Support - Muscular Relaxation - Natural Point of Aim

The officer's normal handgun shooting stance will probably serve well as the basis for a practical law enforcement patrol rifle standing shooting position. **The feet are approximately shoulder width apart with the shooting side foot dropped back six to twelve inches. Both knees are slightly bent and the body weight is forward.**

The toe of the rifle butt is in the shoulder pocket. On most officers the heel of the butt will be visible above the shoulder when looking from behind. **Both shoulders are hunched (or rolled) forward. The support hand is centered on the fore-end with the fingers together and the hand grips the fore-end.**

The shooting elbow stays parallel to the ground to assist the officer in finding the shoulder pocket. As soon as the officer can consistently place the butt in the correct place, the firing elbow is held at a relaxed angle.

This position gives up the element of "natural point of aim" in the interests of practicality. It is necessary to "muscle" the rifle upwards and towards the shooting side to get the sights on target. This is an acceptable compromise when one considers the tactically undesirable, competition-type, standing, positions that are the alternatives and given the standards of marksmanship that are reasonably expected of the law enforcement officer employing the patrol rifle.

The toe of the rifle butt is in the shoulder pocket to aid in preventing the butt from slipping down while shooting. **The butt is close to the neck** to help position the head correctly behind the sights.

The head is placed naturally on the stock, not being pulled back or pushed forward. **The cheek is pressed firmly on the stock** so that stock weld/spot weld is maintained throughout recoil and recovery. The head must stay down until all shots have been fired.

The pad of the trigger finger is placed on the trigger to ensure pressure is straight to the rear. **There is daylight between the trigger finger and the stock/pistol grip** ensuring no frame contact.

This stance is not intended for long range precision shooting. It is a solid platform from which the law enforcement officer can quickly and accurately engage multiple moving threats at realistic distances, looking over an obstacle or utilizing narrow cover (telephone pole, ETC.). Since this position's foundation is based on muscle strength, it cannot be maintained for extended periods without using some sort of support.

FIRING POSITIONS

Standing Off-Hand Position

- Stand at a 45° angle to target
- Leading leg slightly bent at knee with shooter leaning into rifle
- Feet shoulder width apart
- Handguard held by support hand with elbow pointed downward.
- Pistol grip held by strong hand with trigger finger on trigger, safety “off.”
- Cheek firmly placed to stock
- Buttstock held in pocket of shoulder
- Firing elbow at relaxed angle

Note: The safety remains ON until the officer is in position and intending to fire



IMPORTANT SAFETY ISSUE FOR ALL LOWERED SHOOTING POSITIONS

Note: Any time the officer drops into any lowered shooting position, whether it is kneeling or prone, the officer MUST remember to ALWAYS conduct a 360 degree scan BEFORE rising up in elevation. That scan will not only allow the officer to break their tunnel vision from the threat and see other suspects, it will also insure that the officer is not going to stand up into the line of fire of another officer that may have moved in from behind to assist. In addition, that 360 degree scan NEEDS to be conducted from each level of elevation gained by the officer before rising up to the next level. For example; scan from prone to return to kneeling, and then scan again from kneeling to get up to prone. With each change in elevation the officer will have a different vantage point. The officer must make a threat assessment from each new vantage point.



Officer conducts a 360 degree scan before standing.

More on Scanning before moving



Ideally, as the cover officer, you should attempt to get in physical contact with the officer you're covering. By positioning yourself in contact and to the side of the kneeling (or prone) officer that officer cannot stand up into your gunfire. The kneeling officer would feel the covering officer's presence, and even if the kneeling officer did stand up his movement would knock the covering officer's weapon out of the way.



Another benefit of the covering officer moving up is that it will help to get the muzzle blast from the covering officer's rifle ahead of the kneeling officer. The muzzle blast from a .223 rifle round going off near your head can be unpleasant and very dangerous to your hearing. It is really the covering officer's responsibility to position himself in such a manner, that the expected movement of the point officer, prevents the point officer from moving in front of the cover officer's muzzle. It is always tragic when an officer is killed or wounded by a suspect's gunfire, but it is much more tragic when the bullet comes from the cover officer. In such an event, we are likely to lose both officers, one physically and one psychologically.

THE KNEELING POSITIONS CHECKLIST

Bone Support - Muscular Relaxation - Natural Point of Aim

In the **Speed** (or unsupported) kneeling position is the fastest kneeling position to get into and get out of. It is steadier for most than the Standing position, makes you a smaller target, and in some circumstances, changes your angle of fire upwards which may lessen your risk of collateral damage. The officer takes a step forward with the support side foot and places the shooting side knee on the ground (with knee facing the target). The step forward must be large enough so that the front foot remains flat on the ground and is not up on the toes. From the waist upwards, the officer maintains their normal standing shooting position.

The **Double or Two-Knee** kneeling position can be considered as a continuation of the Speed kneel as the officer simply lowers the support side knee to go from Speed to Double kneel. The position provides more stability, adapts well with cover, and is generally more comfortable for extended periods of time. The height of this position can be modified by spreading the legs and/or sitting back on the heels. Double Kneel is slower to get into and out of than Speed kneel.

In the **Braced** (or supported) kneeling position, most shooters find this to be the steadiest of the kneeling positions while it is the slowest to get into and out of. Depending on body size, some officers find it more difficult to breathe while in this position. To assume this position, the officer first adopts the Speed kneeling position and then sits down on the rear foot. The rear foot may have the toe of the boot, the boot laces, or the side of the foot in contact with the ground. The flat part of the forward (support) arm above/behind the elbow (NOT the point of the elbow) is now placed over the front knee. The front foot (kept flat on the ground) will need to be extended forward. The shooting elbow stays parallel to the ground to assist the officer in finding the shoulder pocket. As soon as the officer can consistently place the butt in the correct place this elbow is tucked down against the side of the body or held in a relaxed position.

The following are some points to consider:

In the Braced (or supported) kneeling position the support hand is as far forward as possible. This hand may have to be pulled back to raise the muzzle for a natural point of aim.

For precision shooting, the fore-end is rested in the “V” formed between the thumb and forefinger of the support hand with the support hand open/relaxed - do not grip the fore-end tightly.

The toe of the rifle butt is in the shoulder pocket to aid in preventing the butt from slipping down while shooting.

The butt is close to the neck to help position the head correctly behind the sights; the shooter should bring the butt stock up to the face rather than moving the head down to the butt stock.

The cheek is pressed firmly on the stock so that stock weld/spot weld is maintained throughout recoil and recovery.

The head should stay in contact with the stock until all shots have been fired.

The pad of the trigger finger is placed on the trigger to ensure pressure is straight to the rear. There is daylight between the trigger finger and the stock/pistol grip ensuring no frame contact.

NOW CHECK NATURAL POINT OF AIM: (Remember trigger press will be accomplished during the natural respiratory pause so be sure to check the intended shooting position without air in the lungs)

1. Assume your shooting position and sight-in on the target, keeping the sights as steady as possible.
2. Breathe deeply while watching the sights. The front sight should move vertically down as the officer inhales and back up to the point of aim when the officer exhales back to the natural respiratory pause.
3. Now, close the eyes for a few seconds and relax the body. Open the eyes and if the sights are not still lined up on the original point of aim, usually drifting to the right or left, to where the relaxed muscles moved them; this is the body's NPA and it needs to be moved back on target.
4. Shift the body position until the sights are back on target - do not muscle the rifle to realign the sights. Repeat this check a few times until the relaxed body position maintains the sights on target

NOTE: To shoot the tightest possible group the officer must be in a stable position from which all the shots can be fired. Changing the position between shots will most likely increase the size of the group.

FIRING POSITIONS

Speed Kneeling Position

- Drop down onto strong knee and keep upper body erect.
- Upper body resembles offhand position.
- Handguard held by support hand with elbow pointed downward.
- Pistol grip held by strong hand with trigger finger on trigger, safety “off.”
- Cheek firmly placed to stock.
- Sights brought to target as you kneel.

Note: The safety remains ON until the officer is in position and intending to fire



FIRING POSITIONS

Double Kneeling Position

- Move to Speed kneel, then Two-Knee, or just drop down onto both knees and sit back on both heels.
- Upper body resembles offhand position.
- Handguard held by support hand with elbow pointed downward.
- Pistol grip held by strong hand with trigger finger on trigger, safety “off.”
- Cheek firmly placed to stock.
- Sights brought to target as you sit back on heels.
- Recover to speed kneel, standing.

Note: The safety remains ON until the officer is in position and intending to fire



FIRING POSITIONS

Braced Kneeling Position

- Drop down onto strong knee and sit back on the strong side heel or side of foot.
- Brace support elbow on or ahead of other knee.
- Handguard held by support hand.
- Cheek firmly placed to stock.
- Adjust body to acquire natural point of aim.
- Proper position acquired when rifle held by bone support, not muscle tension.
- Pistol grip held by strong hand with trigger finger on trigger, safety “off.”

Note: The safety remains ON until the officer is in position and intending to fire



THE SITTING POSITION CHECKLIST

Bone Support - Muscular Relaxation - Natural Point of Aim

Crossed-Legs, Crossed-Ankles or Open-Leg sitting positions are more stable than either standing or kneeling but are the slowest of all positions to get into and are the slowest to get out of. These are probably the most comfortable positions to be in during an extended LE situation. The Open-Leg variation is particularly well suited for shooting on a down slope or hillside. If the legs or ankles are crossed the support side leg is over, or in front of, the shooting side leg. Leg muscles relaxed as much as possible. The torso is bent forward at the waist with as much of the body behind the rifle as possible.

The support elbow is under the rifle, for bone support, as much as. Ideally both elbows are blocked in front of or inside the knees (not on top of the knees) to prevent the elbows from being dislodged during recoil.

Adjustment of the elbow and/or knee positions will allow the shoulders to be kept level that will prevent the rifle from canting. **The rifle and sights are vertical/upright.**

For precision shooting, the fore-end is rested in the “V: formed between the thumb and forefinger of the support hand with the support hand open/relaxed - do not grip the fore-end tightly.

The toe of the rifle butt is in the shoulder pocket to aid in preventing the butt from slipping down while shooting.

The butt is close to the neck to help position the head correctly behind the sights; the shooter should bring the butt stock up to the face rather than moving the head down to the butt stock.

The cheek is pressed firmly on the stock so that stock weld/spot weld is maintained throughout recoil and recovery.

The head should stay in contact with the stock until all shots have been fired.

The pad of the trigger finger is placed on the trigger to ensure pressure is straight to the rear. There is daylight between the trigger finger and the stock/pistol grip ensuring no frame contact.

NOW CHECK NATURAL POINT OF AIM: (Remember trigger squeeze will be accomplished during the natural respiratory pause so be sure to check the intended shooting position without air in the lungs)

1. Assume your shooting position and sight-in on the target, keeping the sights as steady as possible.

2. Breathe deeply while watching the sights. The front sight should move vertically down as the officer inhales and back up to the point of aim when the officer exhales back to the natural respiratory pause.
3. Now, close the eyes for a few seconds and relax the body. Open the eyes and if the sights are not still lined up on the original point of aim, usually drifting to the right or left, to where the relaxed muscles moved them; this is the body's NPA and it needs to be moved back on target.
4. Shift the body position until the sights are back on target - do not muscle the rifle to re-align the sights. Repeat this check a few times until the relaxed body position maintains the sights on target

NOTE: To shoot the tightest possible group the officer must be in a stable position from which all the shots can be fired. Changing the position between shots will most likely increase the size of the group.

FIRING POSITIONS

Sitting Position, Crossed Legged

- Shooter crosses feet and lowers to sitting position.
- Shooter may break the fall with support hand.
- Shooter rests cross-legged.
- Handguard held by support hand with support elbow on support knee.
- Pistol grip held by strong hand with trigger finger on trigger, safety “off.”
- Strong elbow on strong knee.
- Cheek firmly held to stock.
- Buttstock held to strong shoulder.
- Recover to speed kneel, standing.

Note: The safety remains ON until the officer is in position and intending to fire



FIRING POSITIONS

Sitting Position, Crossed Ankle

- Shooter lowers to sitting position and extends legs crossing ankles.
- Shooter may break the fall with support hand.
- Shooter rests with ankles crossed.
- Handguard held by support hand with support elbow locked inside support knee.
- Strong side elbow locked inside strong knee.
- Pistol grip held by strong hand with trigger finger on trigger, safety “off.”
- Cheek firmly held to stock.
- Buttstock held to strong shoulder.

Note: The safety remains ON until the officer is in position and intending to fire



FIRING POSITIONS

Sitting Position, Open

- Officer lowers to sitting position and extends legs
- Officer bends knees keeping feet about shoulder width apart
- Officer may break the fall with support hand
- Handguard held by support hand with support elbow locked inside support knee.
- Strong side elbow locked inside strong knee
- Pistol grip held by strong hand with trigger finger on trigger, safety “off.”
- Cheek firmly held to stock
- Buttstock held to strong shoulder
- Recover to speed kneel, standing.
- If outdoors on gravel or dirt dig heels into ground slightly.
- Works well on a hillside or decline.

Note: The safety remains ON until the officer is in position and intending to fire



FIRING POSITIONS

Squat Position

The **Squat** position is a hasty field position that can be quickly gotten into and out of. It can add great stability for those officers who can master it but is very unstable for those who can't.

Instructor Note: There is a very real danger of officers, who don't get the position just right, to be pushed backwards off balance by recoil, falling backwards on to their butts while trying to control the muzzle of an off-safed, finger-on-the-trigger AR. This position does not do anything better than the Speed kneel and is only offered here so that you will know that there is such a technique being taught in various areas.

To assume, keep both feet flat on the ground and lower the butt toward the heels. Both elbows are supported by the knees. The support hand is on the fore-end.

- Body bladed
- Lower Butt
- Feet flat on the ground
- Elbows may or may not rest on knees

Note: The safety remains ON until the officer is in position and intending to fire



THE PRONE POSITION CHECKLIST

Bone Support - Muscular Relaxation - Natural Point of Aim

The **Prone** position is the steadiest of all positions but it is probably the least useful in LE situations as it severely limits the ability to see due to the ever-present obstructions of daily life, and seems to quickly lead to neck strain during extended LE scenarios. While this position presents the officer as the smallest target (minus any cover) it also presents the head, neck, and unprotected upper chest (soft body armor gives little or no protection as it is under the officer) to incoming projectiles and ricochets

The body is well behind the rifle. (Presents a smaller target / absorbs recoil resulting in a more consistent position) The legs are open and flat with toes pointed out (lower position) or the shooting side knee is drawn up with both feet pointed towards the shooting side (.). The feet (ankles) are as flat on the ground as possible - not up on the toes.

The flat part of the forward (support) arm above/behind the elbow (NOT the point of the elbow) is in contact with the ground. This is the same part of the arm that goes over the knee in a kneeling supported position. The support elbow is as far under the rifle (sideways) as possible for bone support.

The shooting side elbow is placed naturally on the ground. Moving this elbow sideways will allow the student to level the shoulders and prevent the rifle from canting. The rifle and sights are vertical/upright.

The support hand is as far forward as possible. This hand may have to be pulled back in order to raise the muzzle for a natural point of aim. For precision shooting, the fore-end is rested in the "V" formed between the thumb and forefinger of the support hand with the support hand open/relaxed - do not grip the fore-end tightly.

The toe of the rifle butt is in the shoulder pocket to aid in preventing the butt from slipping down while shooting.

The butt is close to the neck to help position the head correctly behind the sights; the officer should bring the butt stock up to the face rather than moving the head down to the butt stock.

The cheek is pressed firmly on the stock so that stock weld/spot weld is maintained throughout recoil and recovery.

The head should stay in contact with the stock until all shots have been fired.

The pad of the trigger finger is placed on the trigger to ensure pressure is straight to the rear. There is daylight between the trigger finger and the stock/pistol grip ensuring no frame contact.

NOW CHECK NATURAL POINT OF AIM: (Remember trigger squeeze will be accomplished during the natural respiratory pause so be sure to check the intended shooting position without air in the lungs)

1. Assume your shooting position and sight-in on the target, keeping the sights as steady as possible.
2. Breathe deeply while watching the sights. The front sight should move vertically down as the officer inhales and back up to the point of aim when the officer exhales back to the natural respiratory pause.
3. Now, close the eyes for a few seconds and relax the body. Open the eyes and if the sights are not still lined up on the original point of aim, usually drifting to the right or left, to where the relaxed muscles moved them; this is the body's NPA and it needs to be moved back on target.
4. Shift the body position until the sights are back on target - do not muscle the rifle to re-align the sights. Repeat this check a few times until the relaxed body position maintains the sights on target

NOTE: To shoot the tightest possible group the officer must be in a stable position from which all the shots can be fired. Changing the position between shots will most likely increase the size of the group.

FIRING POSITIONS

Prone Position

- Align body in boxer stance to target.
- Lower onto both knees (don't drop down hard as injury can occur).
- Support hand out in front of shooter to brace fall forward until prone.
- Weapon pointed down range at all times. **Safety on until in position!**
- Handguard held by support hand with elbow pointed downward. **The 30rd magazine may be used as a "monopod" to support and steady the rifle without any loss of accuracy.**
- Both legs can be extended to rear with feet spread comfortably apart or strong leg can be bent at knee to aid in breathing.
- Cheek held firmly to stock. Stock held firmly to shoulder by strong hand.
- Pistol grip held by strong hand with trigger finger on trigger, safety "off."
- Recover to speed kneel, standing.

Note: The safety remains ON until the officer is in position and intending to fire.

There is a myth out there that using the 30rd magazine as a monopod will cause inaccuracy. This may be somewhat true in the accuracy demands of precision competitive target sports, but not in gun-fighting!! Recent testing shows that there is no change in point of impact or increase in group size regardless of the type of surface rested on. These tests do show that shooters can get their shots off about 40% faster while delivering the same level of accuracy, and 40% faster IS important in gun-fighting!!!



FIRING POSITIONS

Roll Over Prone Position

This technique will allow the officer to adapt to various covered shooting locations such as firing from under/behind a vehicle.

- Begin by assuming a standard prone position.
- The officer brings the support side knee up to a 90 degree bend, at the same time the officer rolls slightly over onto their strong side.
- Allow the rifle to roll over as well, thereby gaining a sight picture through the sights. The sight picture will be at a 90 degree offset as well and you will need to allow for a different kind of mechanical off-set, but the rifle will function normally. The officer should attempt to maintain a consistent eye relief

Note: The safety remains ON until the officer is in position and intending to fire. Shooting a right-side roll-over, as pictured above on a hard surface, be aware that spent casings may bounce back up from the pavement into the ejection port causing a malfunction.

Make sure the officer understands the now-different mechanical off-set. In this illustration, the bullet is not being launched upwards like normal, it is being launched to the right. Roll the rifle the opposite direction to the left and the bullet will now be launched to the left. The amount of difference will depend on the range to the target.



FIRING POSITIONS

Patrol Car

Over the hood position:

When firing over the hood of the patrol car remember the following; the mechanical offset will cause the bullet to strike 2.5" or more below the line of sight. Remind students that this firing position potentially exposes the officer's shoulders, neck and head.

The position is obtained by placing the butt of the weapon in to the shoulder pocket and maintaining a good cheek weld on the stock. The officer can then choose either single kneeling supported, single kneeling unsupported, or double kneeling positions. Once in position, be sure not to allow the barrel to contact the hood of the vehicle; place the back of the support hand against the hood or ball the support hand in to a fist and rest the fore-end of the weapon on top of the fist. **Check for mechanical offset to make sure the barrel does not cover the crown of the hood of the patrol car.** If necessary, the officer may have to use a blanket or jacket to elevate the barrel. This shooting position is generally more suited to shooting at an upward angle because of the mechanical offset.

Note: The safety remains ON until the officer is in position and intending to fire. Additionally, when using this position in training exercises you will need to protect any vehicle surfaces that you are shooting over from the muzzle blast of the AR. Close proximity rifle muzzle blast can permanently damage the paint of a patrol car with a single shot so put a buffer down.





Officer has a clear sight picture through his optic or iron sights...BUT!



His muzzle is NOT clear of the crown of the hood. A round fired from this position will impact the vehicle.

In order to use the engine block for maximum protection, an officer may crowd the vehicle so that he can use the hood for support as well.



Extending the rifle over the top of your cover will ensure that you don't shoot your cover due to mechanical off-set; it will also prevent reflection of muzzle blast and weapon light beam. In the picture above, the 30rd magazine limits how low the officer can go.

The target he presents is illustrated below.



Moving the magazine back off of the hood allows to get just a little lower as shown below.



Canting the rifle, as demonstrated below, will allow you to minimize your self as a target, spacing the handguard of the rifle with your support hand will give you an increase in elevation if you need it.



Laying the handguard directly on the top of cover should give the muzzle enough clearance to ensure that the bullet clears cover.



Resting on the handguard will not have any significance on accuracy; resting the steel barrel on cover may have a negative effect on accuracy. The picture above shows that this is a decent one-handed technique as well.

The picture belows that you can make yourself the smallest possible target by not only canting the rifle, but canting your head as well.



Remember these two points when canting the rifle:

1. **Canting the rifle to the right, while of over a surface such as the hood/truck of a vehicle or while very close to the ground, will position you ejection port very close to that surface. There may not be enough room for the empty casing to clear the ejection port, and if there is enough room to clear, the casing might bounce right back into the ejection port to create a stovepipe malfunction.**



- 2.
3. **The mechanical off-set of your sights is now horizontal instead of vertical so the bullet trajectory will be somewhat change. This should not make much difference on torso shots out to 75 yards or so but the bullet will go dramatically off the right, if canted right, on long range targets, and it will go to the left in the same fashion if canted to the left.**

TIPS OF THE USE OF COVER

1. Think cover while in Condition Orange - don't wait until the shooting starts. Take cover into consideration in planning your actions, movements, and tactics.
2. Use cover whenever possible. Skillful use of cover may be more important to your survival than your shooting ability.
3. If you are within 1-2 steps of cover, you can probably get to cover as fast or faster than you can aim and fire your rifle. While moving to cover, you can be bringing your rifle to bear on the threat, and you will be harder to hit while moving.
4. Cover will stop or deflect bullets from the weapon being fired at you, while concealment only hides you from view but will not stop bullets. Choose cover over concealment whenever possible, but remember that even concealment is better than nothing. Darkness and shadow are forms of concealment, while body armor is cover you carry with you.
5. Reload and clear malfunctions behind cover.
6. Do not leave cover unless you must.
7. Reload before leaving cover - don't get caught out in the open with an empty or partially-empty gun.
8. Move from cover to cover. Have your move planned (two moves in advance if possible) before you leave cover - don't get out in the open and then try to decide where to go. Make sure that you have determined that your intended path is clear before you expose yourself from cover. Cover open ground quickly but under control, ready to fire if necessary.
9. When firing from cover, expose as little of yourself as possible, and remain exposed for the shortest possible time. Stay far enough back from cover so that you can have your rifle in

position, ready to fire, before you roll out. Then roll out quickly, fire the necessary amount shots to control the situation. If you've made hits then stay out and dominate the ground; if not, roll back and prepare yourself for your next attempt.

10. Extending your rifle barrel out past the edge of your cover has *two positive* effects; **you ensure that your bullet clears cover** and you **don't get muzzle blast reflection or weapon light reflection**. The old adage of "Don't extend your weapon, hands, or arms beyond your cover into areas you have not yet cleared" may be sound in searching but not so much in engaging a threat.
11. Don't keep firing from the same position. Try to appear in a different spot each time, maximizing the time it will take your opponent to fire an accurate shot at you.
12. Stay behind cover until you are certain the danger has passed. There is no need to rush up to a fallen adversary - he may still be capable of doing you harm, or he may have a partner you haven't seen.

OPERATING IN CLOSE QUARTERS

As many SWAT teams around the country are finding, the patrol rifle in a .223 caliber is becoming the preferred weapon for most entry team members. While the overall rifle length is slightly longer than the old standby MP-5 submachine gun, the superior wound ballistics and lighter/faster bullet of the .223 round provide for greater terminal performance, without necessitating the use of full-auto fire. (WSCJTC does not believe that there is a valid laws enforcement use for full-auto fire with a rifle-caliber firearm.) Additionally, there is far less likelihood of a missed .223 round exiting a residential building than that of a slower, more heavily constructed pistol bullet from a longer submachine gun/carbine length barrel.

Below are a few key points instructors should share with their students regarding operating in close quarters with the patrol rifle.

If the weapon has standard iron sights flip to the largest rear aperture. That will allow the shooter to pick up the sights more quickly in a low light situation. Modern rifle optical sight systems like the ACOG, EO Tech, and Aimpoint models greatly enhance the shooters abilities in low light CQB scenarios. (See Section 5, Choosing Rifle Optics)

If the weapon has a sliding stock like the M-4 Carbine the stock should be collapsed, fully closed or almost fully closed. That will shorten up the weapon and give the shooter more maneuverability.

Right Handed Shooter – Left Hand Corners



Shortened stock allows officer to stay back further from the corner in tight spaces.

Officer should be reminded to avoid “telegraphing” their position by having their muzzles announce their presence to a suspect.



A Dangerous Situation – Must be avoided if at all possible!

Most officers are familiar with the term “Slicing the Pie” when we discuss cornering tactics. Rifle shooters should be reminded that they may be safer to slice the pie using a more squared up stance rather than a bladed type stance. This will insure that they can maintain their balance should they stumble over some unseen object or have another team member stumble into them.



A bladed stance

Imagine what would happen to the shooter if another officer stumbled and bumped into their back in a darkened basement. The shooter would be knocked into the danger area.



(A bump in the direction of the arrow >>> would push the shooter out from the corner.)

Slicing the pie with a squared stance the officer remains in balance and is much less likely to stumble into the danger area.



USING COVER AS A FIRING SUPPORT

In certain circumstances the officer may be able to take advantage of a building, wall, window sill, or other stable structure to use as a firing support for their rifle. Imagine covering a long hallway in a school, hospital, or public building, while other officers are conducting an extended building search. Bracing ones rifle against a solid object could increase the likelihood of consistent hits down range on the threat.

A word of caution: The officer must be careful to not telegraph his/her position to any potential threats as mentioned above. In addition the operator should make sure the barrel of the rifle is not in contact with the support as that can greatly affect the accuracy of the shot.



The support hand makes an “L” or a “V”. The rifle is cradled in the support hand.

TRANSITIONING THE RIFLE TO THE SUPPORT SIDE SHOULDER

In any situation where the patrol rifle operator is attempting to adapt to or utilize a specific object for cover it is obvious that certain objects favor the right handed shooter while other objects or room configurations favor the left handed shooter. It makes perfect sense then to teach the patrol rifle shooter to transition from the strong side to the support side so as to adapt to different tactical angles and forms of cover they may encounter.

When provided with the specific skill steps and a little bit of training the shooter can become very proficient firing from the “weak” or support side. Transitioning to the support side becomes even more natural or intuitive when the rifle is equipped with one of the red dot type optical sighting devices. Although not necessarily the preferred method for long range engagements, transitioning to the support side can be a critically important tactic when dealing with hostile threats at the relatively close distances encountered in the average low light, indoor, CQB, situations many officers are facing today.

Instructors Note: Many (most) of your officers will have had very little training in transitioning and shooting from their support side. It is important that we provide them with step by step instructions and encourage them to be slow and methodical in the learning and practice sessions. At first the steps will seem awkward or clunky but soon the steps will become second nature and the officers will be placing accurate hits on the target.

A right handed officer approaches a right hand corner while searching the exterior of a building. Note the squared stance, finger indexed, safety ON.





The officer has decided to transition to her support side. To Begin: The officer moves her firing hand (right hand) to the front of the magazine, keeping a firm grip on the weapon.



Close up view



Next the officer grabs the pistol grip with what had been her support hand (left hand). Moves her right hand to the fore end, moves the butt stock to her left shoulder and adjusts her feet into a balanced (squared or bladed) left side stance. The safety remains on during the transition.



Note: Adjusted stance

